



## Query

A rare day off, and I have one objective: not to scour OVID for answers to patients' questions, not to complete the onerous onslaught of insurance-company forms, not to dictate the waiting backlog of discharge summaries. I've worked for two weeks to free up a single Saturday. No, I want to do something with my daughter that happens but once a year.

We are going to build a snowman.

With the air of a practised snowman artisan (she's four), she tells me: "We need eyes and ears and a mouth and a carrot!" We investigate the contents of our fridge and remove a carrot nose, two eye onions, a beet mouth. We rip two leaves of lettuce for ears. This year our snowman will be healthy and organic, a vegetable-face. On the way outside we find a couple of twigs for arms.

Next she instructs: "This snowman is going to be me. Next day can we build a snowman family, Daddy?" I agree. Weather permitting, tomorrow we will build Mommy Snowman, Daddy Snowman, and Snowcat.

It is a clear day; the temperature holds on the cusp of a thaw. The snow is wet and quickly packs into large balls. My daughter supervises the construction process — *Put the circles here, Daddy!* — and offers imperious help only when it comes time to make the face. She sticks the carrot deep into the head; the other vegetables are placed at

Picasso-like angles. The beet mouth is a deep red, an open O. She surveys her work.

"Good snowman," she says, and then flops onto an undisturbed area of our yard. She waves her arms and legs to make a snow angel.

As I watch her, I notice the red pigment begin to bleed out of the beet. It seeps down the snowman's chin and onto his chest. My daughter is up now and running toward me with a snowball. She's laughing transgressively, unsure whether I'll allow her to pelt me with it. Then I remember: tomorrow I have to work. I'll be in my office, scouring OVID, filling out insurance forms and dictating discharges. It's a testament to my daughter's power that after just an hour in her presence I can forget about my job. We'll have to reschedule our snow-family date, and I know that she won't understand or accept my explanations. All she will know is that I said yes, and that I'm now saying no.

I play-act running away from her, dodging the snowball. She runs after me, reassured that it's okay to get Daddy. We have the day to stalk the backyard and play — enough time to tire her out and go inside, peel off her sopping snowsuit, and put her to bed for a nap. Once she's asleep I'll sneak back outside and roll more snow to round out the family in our backyard.

—Dr. Ursus